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1. "I was recently introduced to an Armenian young man, who, with his family, had fled from the satellite paradise of Rumania. Very luckily for him and his family, they were on Persian passports, which enabled them to leave the country at the end of their seemingly endless troubles and hardships.
2. "He told me that his aged father had been a storekeeper in the good old days; when the Soviets took over Rumania, he was virtually forced out of business. The Rent Control Commission increased his shop rent severalfold; the income tax went sky-high and finally his sources of supply became non-existent. Things did not end there, however.
3. "One fine morning someone knocked at the door. It was an official of the House Allocation Committee, who ruled that they should vacate the residence the following day as it was allocated to another family. When asked where they would move to, the official shrugged and said that they would be given an adequate residence in exchange. The next day it rained very heavily, and no one called to ask them to vacate the premises, but the following day a team of porters accompanied the stern-looking Committee official, and despite every noisy form of protest, their household effects were hurriedly hauled to a waiting lorry. They were told that they had been given the option of choosing one but of three houses offered to them; on the way the lorry driver who knew the locations informed them in confidence that none of the three places were suitable for habitation; the first one was a two-room place with no doors and water closet; the second one was composed of one large room and a water closet in an old isolated area very far away from the town; the third was an attic where rat holes were in great evidence. Eventually they sought and found temporary shelter in a relative's house.
4. "Two months later when their protest-petition was brought to the attention of the Chairman of the House Allocations Committee, it was claimed that some mistake had been made and therefore the matter would be reviewed. It was still under review when our young man and his family left the satellite paradise of Rumania for Beirut, Lebanon.

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5. "Foreign cultural institutes were allowed to operate in the country. It was a very subtle and cunning move on the part of the new rulers and their supporters; it simply meant that they would be entitled to get reciprocal facilities--facilities, which would in the course of time be used as centers of evil doings such as spying, sabotage and subversive propaganda.
6. "It was not possible, however, to stop the people from frequenting the foreign cultural institutes once they were established with the apparent approval of the authorities. Some method had to be devised in the circumstances, and one of the first victims was a young Armenian girl. The person in question, whose identity must not be disclosed for obvious reasons, was a member of an institute where 'approved' foreign language books were in the lending library; it was thought that since the institutes were allowed to operate, they had the 'blessings' of the rulers, and many joined as members. One day as the lady was returning home after having borrowed two books from the institute's library, a plainclothes man accosted her and asked for her identity card. She mentioned that the identity card was at her home and would the 'comrade' mind accompanying her to the house if he wanted to have a look at it; as the conversation was going on, the 'comrade' joined by one of his kind, and together they hauled the young lady into a taxi to take her to her residence which eventually turned out to be a police station of sorts.
7. "Thus the young lady vanished. Her bewildered parents searched all the possible and impossible places including the morgue; the police and allied authorities professed complete ignorance but suggested that she might have run away with a lover. One rainy morning, three months later, she turned up; she was a shadow of her former self, the one time vivacious girl had become sullen and uncommunicative. All that her parents got out of her was that she had been given the third degree over and over, and accused of spying for foreign powers.
8. "She had been kept in a women's prison where she found several girl members of foreign cultural institutes. The prison was damp and cold, the food well within the starvation bracket and, as a direct result, many died.
9. "If you had savings in gold, you were directed to exchange them with paper money at the bank; the rate of exchange was of course very adverse one.
10. "On the black market gold was king; you could buy things, go places and do things far beyond ordinary expectations...provided you were not caught with it. If your luck ran out, it was just too bad, for it meant a spell of five years in prison.
11. "It was often possible to betray people and get some gold coins 'planted' when the search for it was in progress. It was also possible in many instances to find some gold coins tucked away somewhere in the household effects; in both cases great hardship and persecution resulted from the possession of the forbidden metal.
12. "When the stooges and their henchmen were out hunting, it was time for Tom, Dick, and Harry to take cover; in such circumstances, gold coins were often sent down the drains where ownership claims and counterclaims could not be proved. But many were the unfortunate cases where lack of timely warning had caused disaster.
13. "If you had a 'bourgeoisie' background, you were a marked man. You should never advance; on the contrary you had always to go backward. You had to repent for the 'sins' of your father. He might be a modest and hard-working merchant or a storekeeper; he might own a small building in which to house his family and rent a flat or two; he might even own some land for farming or poultry raising, all the same he was an enemy of the new order, and all his family was likewise classified.

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14. "If you wanted to go to college, its doors were closed for you; there were long forms to fill in and it was always a point for them to ask you the profession and possessions of your father and mother. If you tried to dodge the issues, and make a vague statement, you would be caught in no time, for the 'secret' files knew all there was to know.
15. "You were barred no matter what aptitude you showed; this was the new order under the cloak of people's democracy and equality for all.
16. "Laborers and workmen in the factories were toiling far more than in the past for less money in wages. There were always deductions made under various pretexts and devices.
17. "Who was happy in the satellite paradise of Rumania, if almost everybody was unhappy? We asked the young Armenian.
18. "In his opinion, only the Party people are enjoying themselves so long as they are on the fence; other people who are having the time of their lives are the opportunists and other rats of humanity. But none are sure of their time; it is known that 'cliques' within the Party come and go and with changes officials come and go too; as for opportunists and their unhappy companions, they are sooner or later found out and off they go down the drain."

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